**Manigal**

**Project Description**

The gypsy community in south Chennai is a nomadic community of 60 and odd families. Garbage clearing, rag picking and bead selling are their main sources of livelihood. Hunting is also practised by some. Their mother tongue is Vaigiri, a language close to Gujarathi/Marathi. Their dress and customs are different from others around them. They live as a marginalized community, isolated from the rest of the society. However they have maintained a strong sense of group identity.

Movies are very popular and TVs are seldom turned off in their one room tenements. Gambling is another past time for the community. Because of their profession as rag pickers families tend to store recyclable waste they collect outside their houses. Boys and girls too are involved in collecting recyclable wastes and sorting it. Despite several interventions by the Govt and other NGOs no significant changes were evident in the life style of these families. They continue to remain as ragpickers absorbing their children into the profession as they go along.

In this scenario Project Manigal was started in the year 2004. It made a modest beginning with a Non formal Education program in the colony to create interest in schooling and to promote education as a valuable asset. Then it moved to the local primary school, coaxing a few gypsy children to stay and learn inside the school premises. Over the years some children not only stayed, but moved up the primary ladder. The children who broke the barriers and stepped into middle schools became role models for others. The gypsies are slowly starting to access educational opportunities available around them. Currently 30 and odd children are pursuing schooling in primary and middle/ high schools in the area. The project was run with contributions from interested individuals.

Gypsy children often travel with their families to far off places to participate in fairs and festivals which affects their continuity in school. Parents are not present in the mornings to send children to school which results in high absenteeism/late attendance. Learning through Tamil medium which is not their mother tongue is also a barrier. The learning levels of the gypsy children and the lessons they are expected to handle in class often do not match. In order to overcome these barriers the project staff visit various schools and the colony and give individualized attention and coaching in small sub groups. Such personal and intensive inputs, starting at the level of the child, rather than with the lessons help them to continue their education even after a break.

Education of gypsy children is a challenging process interconnected to social ,cultural and economic marginalization that confront the gypsies. Changing the educational profile of the community is a long and involved process. Nevertheless it is a valuable and important tool in their empowerment.

**Purpose/goal**

To promote education as a tool to change the marginal status of the gypsies.

To use schooling as a tool to keep children in a safe environment and away from work.

To break the barriers that prevent them from accessing the educational and other available services. Act as a link/mentor between school and the gypsy community for better access integration and adjustment.

**Project Focus -** education

**Area**  - urban

**Budget 2012**

I Education

1. Honorarium to staff/resource persons

20,000 x 12 2,40,000

1. Teaching and learning material 10,000

**Sub total 2,50,000**

II Sponsorship

1. Uniforms, books, fees, bags, shoes/slippers 50,000
2. Hostel expenses 30,000
3. Monthly conveyance(van/auto) 2000 x 12 24,000

**Sub total 104,000**

III Administration

1. Conveyance 2000 x 12 24,000
2. Telephone charges 1000 x12 12,000

**Sub total 36,000**

**Total 3,90,000**

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